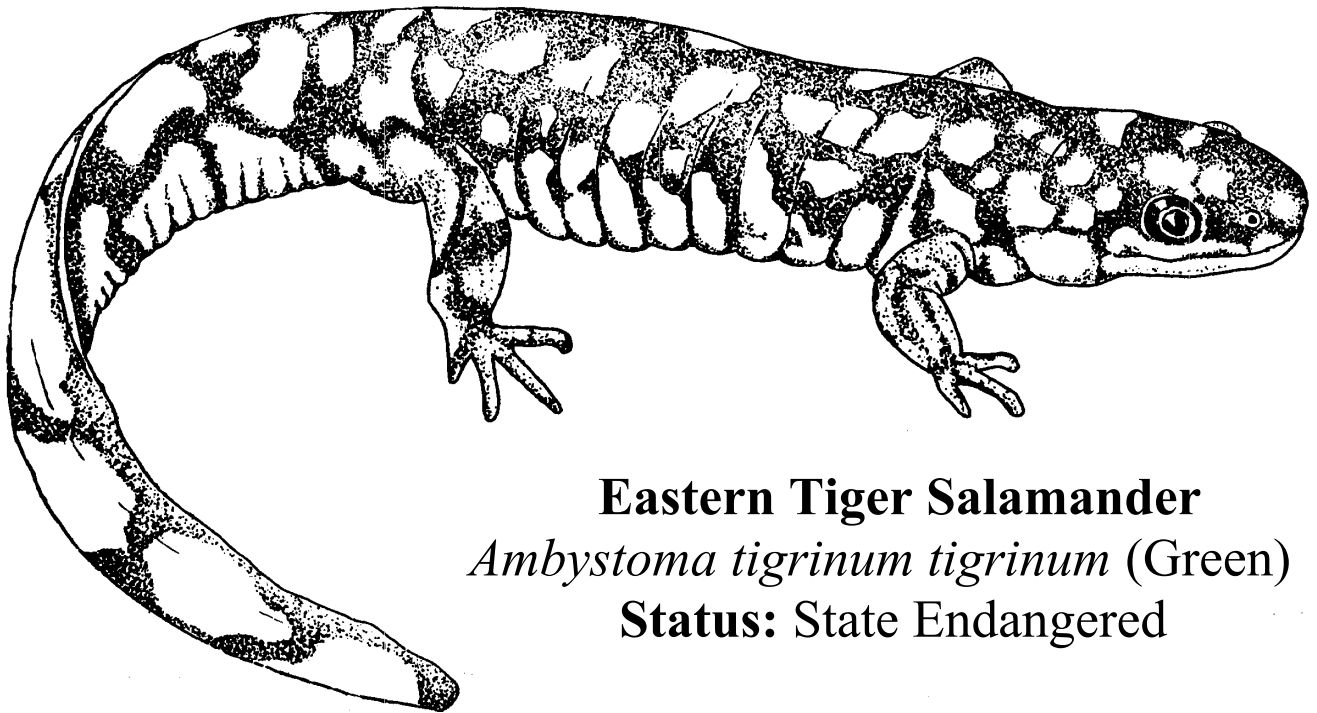


# Virginia's Wildlife

## Species Profile



### Eastern Tiger Salamander

*Ambystoma tigrinum tigrinum* (Green)

**Status:** State Endangered

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries  
Wildlife Diversity Division  
Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program  
4010 West Broad Street  
P.O. Box 11104  
Richmond, VA 23230-1104  
804-367-8999



[www.dgif.state.va.us](http://www.dgif.state.va.us)

Wildlife Diversity Biologists  
(I) Williamsburg: 757-253-7072  
(II) Forest: 804-525-7522  
(III) Blacksburg: 540-951-7923  
(IV) Verona: 540-248-9360  
(V) Fredericksburg: 540-899-4169

**Support Virginia's Nongame Wildlife Program!**  
**Remember the Nongame Wildlife Tax Checkoff as you do your Virginia state income taxes this year.**

# Virginia's Wildlife Species Profile: Eastern Tiger Salamander

## Virginia Distribution: Coastal Plain and Blue Ridge provinces

### Characteristics

The eastern tiger salamander is the largest mole salamander found in Virginia. Adults reach lengths of 110 mm from snout to vent and total lengths of 254 mm (10 inches). Their heads are broad and depressed with widely separated eyes. Distinguishing features include 12 costal grooves located along their sides between their limbs. The color ranges from dark brown to dull black with irregularly shaped, yellow to olive colored dorsal blotches from the snout to the tip of the tail. Unlike other salamanders in their family, they have pointed and depressed toes.

### Feeding

Larval and adult eastern tiger salamanders are predators, eating anything they can capture. They feed on insects, crustaceans, amphibian larvae, and mollusks.

### Habitat and Distribution

The eastern tiger salamander is primarily seen in the Coastal Plain and Blue Ridge provinces. They have been sighted in four counties in Virginia: Augusta, Isle of Wight, Matthews, and York.

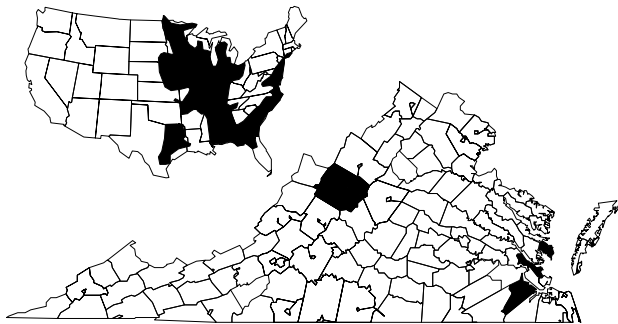


Figure 1. Eastern tiger salamander distribution in Virginia and the United States.

Their terrestrial habitats include any substrate suitable for burrowing; preferably sandy areas near shallow ponds and pine savannas. Breeding habitats include ponds, sinkholes, and vernal pools where fish are absent. The eastern tiger salamander is common throughout much of its range, but is extremely rare in Virginia.

**FACT:** There are 47 species and possibly 5 subspecies of salamanders in Virginia. Of these, 3 are listed by VDGIF as endangered or threatened, and 7 are listed as species of special concern.

### Reproduction

Adults migrate to breeding sites (ponds, stream backwaters, and temporary pools) in late winter. In Virginia, eggs have been found attached to twigs or grasses and in clutch sizes of 350. Most eggs are laid in March and develop into larvae within 30 days.

### Threats

Habitat destruction or modification is a primary threat to the eastern tiger salamander. Pond drainage and the stocking of predatory fish into breeding sites are major contributors to the salamander's decline. Alteration of pond or stream hydrology may decrease the period of time water is available, and thereby reduce larval survivorship. Modification of their terrestrial habitats also threatens the eastern tiger salamander. Logging and urbanization may create unsuitable conditions for adults.

The eastern tiger salamander was placed on the state endangered species list on October 1, 1987. This species is currently known from only two active breeding sites in Augusta and Isle of Wight counties.

### Morphology: Lizard vs. Salamander

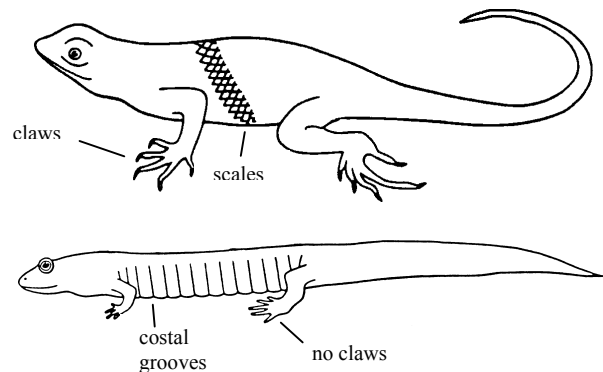


Figure 2. Lizards are scaly and have claws; salamanders have smooth skin and lack claws.

Salamanders have smooth moist skin and toes without claws. They are often distinguished by their color and pattern or their costal grooves and costal folds.

For additional information, consult *A Guide to Endangered and Threatened Species in Virginia* by K. Terwilliger and J.R. Tate or *Salamanders of the United States* by J.W. Petranka.

*Citation:* McGregor, MA. 1999. Eastern tiger salamander: *Ambystoma tigrinum tigrinum* (Green). Virginia's wildlife species profile No. 020052.1. (Fernald RT, series editor). Richmond: Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. (The eastern tiger salamander illustration on the front cover is by Michael J. Pinder.)